relational focus. It is this latter characteristic that Ahlgren draws out most helpfully in her book.

We are made for relationship, with God, with each other, and with all of creation. The quality or tenor of these relationships is Ahlgren's central concern, as they were for Francis and Clare. Just as God is tender with us, tenderness is the quality that most honors the humanity. (It enables us to see with God's eyes.) Tenderness is an inherently relational quality—it cannot exist without an "other." With relationality at the center, Ahlgren is able to show how the lived theology of Francis and Clare (and indeed Pope Francis) holds together individual, social, and political concerns by offering a much needed corrective to the individualistic tendencies of much contemporary spirituality.

The book's six chapters correlate with the stages of pilgrimage undertaken by Ahlgren and her students. The central four chapters are structured around the key phases of the lives of Francis and Clare, and the final chapter draws out more thoroughly the way in which a theology of tenderness might help us engage with contemporary challenges such as poverty and environmental degradation.

There are many riches in the footnotes. Indeed I would have liked to have seen some of this material in the main text. For example, the observation that Giotto's fresco cycle does not include Francis' encounter with the leper is a vivid reminder of the complete exclusion of lepers from medieval society. Ahlgren asks, "Was Francis's plea that we stay faithful to Christ the leper so challenging that no one was willing to hear or heed it?" (35n5) Or to see it in a fresco?

As well as serving those who are exploring the Franciscan tradition, this book provides students in ministerial or other spiritual formation with much to ponder, discuss, and act on. Rather than inspiring a pilgrimage to Assisi it may equally inspire us to seek an encounter at the margins of our cities—with refugees living in detention or the residents of a dementia ward.

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Singleness and the Church: A New Theology of Single Life. By Jana Marguerite Bennett. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. x + 210 pages. $29.95.
doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.89

Examining an impressive range of sources, Jana Bennett exposes how single adults are stigmatized, patronized, caricatured, and neglected by secular and theological voices across the ideological spectrum. Singles are characterized as lonely, self-centered, and indulging in uninhibited

freedom. Christian messages for single adults are too often preoccupied with "no sex" themes. Thus, churches mirror broader US secular culture, which presents romance, sex, and "coupledom" as relationships that matter most in defining adulthood. Bennett challenges readers to set aside such simplistic, negative stereotypes.

While not underestimating truths associated with these stereotypes, Bennett shows that nonvowed, single lives yield richer insights: about discernment in all relationships, about aligning desire for human relationships with desire for God, about nonsexual friendships, about the myth of self-sufficiency, about grace and hope, individual and communal failure, mercy and forgiveness.

Bennett features Saint Paul, Saint Augustine of Hippo, John Wesley, Aelred of Rievaulx, Elizabeth Seton, Stanley Hauerwas, and Dorothy Day to represent persons who are single by choice, in uncommitted sexual relationships, in committed romantic relationships prior to marriage, "same sex attracted" singles, widowed, divorcing/divorced, and single parents. Some biographies are more compelling than others. Seton's story should resonate with many readers, even if they are not widows or single parents. The choice of Wesley is inopportune; he was exceptionally ambivalent about engagement and marriage. Surely there are more compelling Christian guides for persons pursuing committed romantic relationships. *Singleness and the Church* lacks a model for singles who seek marriage, but have found no suitable mate. Readers may see this as a missed opportunity to provide insight. Perhaps Bennett opted against featuring this sort of role model, since she warns Christians not to fixate on God as a matchmaker.

Bennett strives for a moderating approach toward divisive topics, giving space to voices across the theological and cultural spectrum. For example, Bennett recognizes research that highlights typical benefits of married parents for children and hardships faced by single parents. Yet, she reminds readers that "it is quite often the people who are already marginalized by disability, race, and gender that especially feel the detrimental effects of single parenting" (181). She urges Christians not to further marginalize single parents with messages that make them feel they're second-best parents or poor models of discipleship. Sections of *Singleness and the Church* that discuss homosexual persons show Bennett's diligence in engaging "very well-done books about same-sex marriage from a variety of perspectives" (107). Meanwhile, Bennett lifts up friendship as an arena of fulfillment for humans of all sexual orientations and theologies.

Singleness and the Church will be a valuable resource for pastoral ministry training. It will provoke ministers to notice occasions when they perpetuate unhelpful assumptions about single people or ignore their needs, untapped

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2018.89 Published online by Cambridge University Press

insights, and heroes. For example, Christian communities may offer single mothers parenting advice, but sometimes fire unwed mothers, as if to say, "Don't ever mess up, especially sexually" (188). Bennett proposes reviving the ancient "Order of Widows (and Widowers)" to foster companionship, financial/housing support, and vocational recognition for persons who are the "backbone of their congregations" (153). She notes historical precedent for affirming liturgies: "from betrothal services to lifelong friendship vows to penitential [Orthodox] wedding rites for those who have divorced and will be remarried" (208). Similar prayers and rituals could fulfill unmet pastoral needs in our present context.

Bennett advises that churches "cease from providing activities that too often become matchmaking clubs, and stop making marriage, and whom to marry, the important choices" (54). The words "cease" and "stop" seem too extreme. Marriage is an important decision worthy of guidance from Christian mentors, and some Christian singles benefit from church-affiliated initiatives that help them meet compatible spouses. Church-based supports for singles seeking marriage ought not to be eliminated. However, Bennett rightly insists that Christian ministries recognize diverse interests and needs among single adults; churches shouldn't mimic secular culture by idolizing romance and marriage.

Singleness and the Church will be an overly ambitious text for many undergraduates who enter college with little theological education. Yet, its topics deserve attention. Novice students could benefit from instructors who use Bennett's work as a resource; students might someday benefit from a more condensed publication of Bennett's thought.

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@Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds. By Teresa Berger. New York: Routledge, 2018. 146 pages. $119.96.
doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.118

Teresa Berger's *@Worship* offers an extended reflection on the relationship between digital culture and liturgical practice. Berger resists the temptation of so many theologians to decry the digital context as necessarily a threat to the sacramental life of the church. This resistance is one of the many triumphs of her book. Berger takes seriously the realities of digital spaces and the ways in which they are interacting with traditional religious practice. Moreover, she takes seriously the digitally mediated Christian practices, stating without qualification that "ignoring these practices is no longer an option" (xi).